

# Burkina Faso: Community-led Efforts to Halt Land Degradation

## Background

Burkina Faso has had widespread land degradation and desertification due to the droughts in the 1970s and 1980s. More recent climate changes such as decreased rainfall and higher temperatures make droughts and floods more frequent, placing even more pressure on arable land. The problem of land degradation is even more severe given the growth of the population and the use of unsustainable agricultural practices.<sup>1</sup>

To halt land degradation, Burkina Faso has committed to achieving land degradation neutrality by 2030, with a two-pronged effort which focuses on: 1) stopping further degradation of land and 2) restoring degraded land.

## Challenges

The major institutional challenge for Burkina Faso to reach land degradation neutrality by 2030 are inadequate organizational and institutional arrangements characterized by the lack of citizen feedback mechanisms and the technical capacity in the rural communities to

implement sustainable natural resources management (water, soil, forest, and fauna) and agricultural practices. Poor living conditions, economic dependence on agricultural outputs, and lack of awareness and ownership at the local/community level for the broader strategic guidelines at the national level further exacerbate the challenges for preventing land degradation.

## Solution

Given the above challenges, the Government of Burkina Faso has put in place several initiatives to address land degradation. One such project is the Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project (NEER-TAMBA Project), which is part of the Resilient Food Systems (RFS) program, and is one of the three Integrated Approach Pilots funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF). Through the RFS, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and GEF seek to position the management of natural capital as a priority in ongoing efforts to transform the agricultural sector and ensure sustainable food production in sub-Saharan Africa.

The NEER-TAMBA project itself is targeting rural households affected by poverty and food insecurity in the Eastern, North Central, and North regions of Burkina Faso. One of the key goals of the project is to build capacity among smallholder farmers for achieving long-term economic independence.

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.resilientfoodsystems.co/news/burkina-faso-holds-a-regional-workshop-for-land-degradation-neutrality-ldn-target-setting>.

*“The Burkina Faso Participatory Natural Resource Management and Rural Development Project (Neer-Tamba Project) is a tested experience of applying an integrated approach that contributes to improving resilience and food security for rural communities and ensuring sustainability of interventions.” ~ Yawo Jonky Tenou, Task Manager of Resilience Food Systems Program, IFAD*

In 2019, the National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN), the implementing agency for the NEER-TAMBA project, in collaboration with the Union of Naam Groups of the North Region in Burkina Faso, developed a capacity building approach that aimed to equip the various beneficiaries with simplified resource management tools and to train them on Water and Soil Conservation / Soil Defense and Restoration (CES / DRS) and Assisted Natural Regeneration (ANR) practices to increase their productivity for timber and non-timber products. The capacity building approach included use of a combination of knowledge exchange instruments - multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations, workshops, expert visits, and communities of practice.

- **FNGN organized a series of multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations in Yatenga and Loroum Province, North Region.** The objective was to bring together smallholder farmer managers, agricultural producers, and residents to 1) increase their awareness about the role they play as socio-economic actors in their communities and 2) reach consensus on how to self-organize into an endogenous organization to strengthen their influence

and involvement in municipal development plans for the protection of the watershed and sub-watersheds. The dialogues and consultations were designed as a mechanism for citizen feedback which reinforced the legitimacy of the groups/associations of local managers, producers, and residents in the municipal system.

- **Deconcentrated Technical Services (STD) in collaboration with the FNGN also organized workshops in Yatenga and Loroum** for local farmers and managers to increase their knowledge and deepen their understanding of new and sustainable agricultural practices and alternative means of livelihood based on non-timber products. The workshops were designed to be participatory and included beneficiaries. STD personnel conducting these workshops were from the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Animal Resources, and Ministry of Environment and focused on the following techniques:
  - CES / DRS activities
  - techniques for optimizing water management
  - application of management tools for farm management
  - the practice of ANR
  - the rational use of organic / mineral fertilizers
  - harvesting techniques
- **As a complement to the workshops, STD and FNGN identified and trained *Relay Farmers/technical experts*** to provide ongoing support to the farmers and the communities - for at least six months after

completion of the workshops - in the implementation and scale up of the new agricultural practices. The *Relay Farmers* are paid by the NEER-TAMBA Project, go through train-the-trainer workshops, and benefit from a substantive component of “on the job training”, where they report back to the project team on their progress and get feedback from the STD and FNGN experts on possible solutions to the implementation challenges the farmers are facing. The *Relay Farmers* were also trained to support their communities in developing business plans so that the communities themselves could ensure that their living conditions would be enhanced with the adoption of the new agricultural techniques.

- **To scale up and sustain the modified agricultural practices implemented in the communities, FNGN supported a community of practice (CoP) among beneficiaries of the NEER-TAMBA project.** The CoP was designed to support beneficiaries in building resilience through enhanced connectivity and collective action. FNGN facilitated the establishment of smaller groups as part of the CoP efforts which were organized by socio-economic activities. For example, those using sub-watersheds were included in the valuation of Non-Wood Forest Products.

## Results

Four main results emerged from the knowledge exchange efforts described in the Solution section:

- increased awareness and common understanding at community level about what land degradation is and what it means in relation to the community’s living conditions
- strengthened capacity for alternative means of livelihood based on non-timber products
- improved capacity to apply new and sustainable agricultural practices
- scale-up of the modified agricultural practices through ongoing technical support provided by facilitators/relay farmers embedded in the community

The ***multi-stakeholder dialogues and consultations*** raised awareness and facilitated a deeper understanding of the overall NEER-TAMBA project goals among all key stakeholders - the statutory bodies of the FNGN, the executives of the FNGN, community-based associations, farmers, and residents. There was improved consensus by the residents of the sub-watersheds to establish an endogenous organization that enabled local managers to come together for the protection of the sub-watersheds. Managing and participating in the endogenous organization also contributed to improved social cohesion among the various socio-economic actors in the community resulting in business plans to move communities toward improved living conditions. Through strong participation in meetings, they were able to plan development activities within the villages and coordinate the

various efforts within the NEER-TAMBA project framework.



*Community members who participated in one of the multi-stakeholder dialogues*

The **workshops** focused on building increased technical capacity, and the resulted in increasing participant knowledge and skills in CES / DRS and ANR practices on a much larger scale.

The STDs in collaboration with FNGN conducted a total of 44 workshops training 447 women and 1,305 men in Yatenga and Lorum combined. In addition, as of December 2020, 97 relay farmers were trained and are playing the role of extension workers in their communities. They are supporting their communities in further developing their business plans, supporting adoption, and scaling up of alternative means of livelihood through use of non-timber products.



*Handing over of equipment to farmers*

After the workshops, through **expert visits** within their communities by relay farmers and across communities by STD personnel with varied expertise in timber and non-timber production, various communities adopted the techniques, which led to new and improved actions:

- Nutritious gardens were established to play an important role in improving food and nutritional security.

*“The villages that received support to implement nutritious gardens have seen a significant reduction of childhood diseases linked to malnutrition by consuming baobab and moringa (Moringa oleifera) leaves etc., which offer rich and varied nutrients.” ~ Sidbewindin Simon Kabore, Rural Development Engineer, Responsible for Environmental Monitoring of NEER- TAMBA project*

- Half-moons made it possible to curb the water stress which formerly reduced

agricultural yields. Even though this technique (CES / DRS) remains one of the most difficult to implement, all communities involved adopted it because it has proven benefits of soil regeneration and increased farm yields, thus contributing to the achievement of long-term economic independence.

The newly adopted CES/DRS practices made it possible to recover degraded land abandoned by producers.



*Expert Visits – Demonstrations*



*Learning by Doing*

The **community of practice** encouraged the formation of thematic groups so that shared challenges among the farmers could be addressed through their group efforts. FNGN observed during the implementation of the various activities within the **community of practice** that the members of the groups remained united with each other. All groups continued operating, and no groups were dissolved, reflecting a strong intrinsic motivation and sense of belonging to the same community.

The **community of practice** also improved the connectivity between producers - such as seed companies, nurseries, and promoters of nutritious gardens. In addition, with a new project-level activity, such as the provision of small equipment to development producers, the creation and establishment of new working groups is encouraged. This approach reinforces learning in thematic groups and strengthens the dynamic nature of knowledge sharing within a **community of practice**.

One of the main impact indicators developed and monitored by the NEER-TAMBA Project is the carbon footprint and it is calculated periodically with the support of the National Observatory for Sustainable Development (ONDD). ONDD developed and disseminated the EX-ACT tool to facilitate its use by beneficiaries of the project and to give them the means to assess carbon footprints so that rural communities are directly contributing to the CDN (National Determined Contribution) targets in Burkina Faso.

*“It is necessary to involve all stakeholders of the project to support mitigation and adaptation to climate*

*change. We have a popular saying that states that **a lot of streams make a great river!** So, we have to address climate change from many different directions to make a difference.” ~ Sidbewindin Simon Kabore, Rural Development Engineer, Responsible for Environmental Monitoring of NEER-TAMBA project*

## Lessons Learned

- Provide alternative means for livelihood to inspire the community to adopt sustainable agricultural practices.
- For the sustainability of the approach, create a motivation system with incentives adapted to the strategy being implemented.
- Use a participatory approach to have lasting results. In this case, local communities have been more involved both in the planning and the implementation of actions.
- Ongoing implementation support after technical training workshops—through expert visits, facilitator led hands-on training, including support for filling out and processing documents etc.—is critical to successful implementation of technical skills and sustainability of modified practices.
- When the implementation support is embedded in the community, it allows the facilitators/relay farmers/extension workers to interact with the community in a way that the new approaches can be integrated in the local development plan.
- Sustained training of trainers over a period of time with elements of “on the job training” and integration within the community are the hallmarks of an effective ‘train-the-trainers’ approach. It is important that these trainers belong to the community to embed both ownership of the implementation and sustainability beyond the project.
- Participants in the train-the-trainer workshops can be a mix of those who already have the necessary skills and others who bring the interest but their capacity as trainers needs to be built through “on the job training”. This allows the reach of wide cross-section of people who can take on the role of trainers/facilitators “extension workers”
- Involvement of endogenous actors in building the capacities of their peers is critical to the success of the community of practice.
- Any intervention in favor of vulnerable communities must provide financial resources directly to its beneficiaries in addition to strengthening their capacities. This helps boost significantly household incomes, a major incentive for sustainability of new practices.
- It is important to work with robust local networks to ensure continuity and successful implementation of projects especially in fragile and conflict affected areas.

*“This project, as other projects in the region, has experienced many challenges related to terrorism and an insecure environment. Despite this critical situation, the project has achieved over 80% of its expected results. This was made possible*

*thanks to the local network of service providers and operators who provided sustained and adequate support to the rural communities. These support operators, including the National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN), have a large network to support planning, implementation, and monitoring in the field.” ~ Sidbewindin Simon Kabore, Rural Development Engineer, Responsible for Environmental Monitoring of NEER-TAMBA project*

## Instruments

- Multi-stakeholder Dialogues and Consultations
- Workshops
- Expert Visits
- Community of Practice

## Knowledge Brokers

Capacity building of local actors by local NGOs through training techniques in stunts on good practices.

## Implementing Agency

National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN)

## Executing Agencies

Union of Naam Groups (FNGN) of the North region

Arouna ZONGO, Field Operations Team Leader

**Country / state / region where the knowledge exchange happened, or the good practice has been tried and tested:**

Burkina Faso / North Region / Yatenga and Loroum Province

**For the knowledge exchange initiative, please complete the following additional information:**

Participating countries / regions: Burkina Faso

**Knowledge Provider / s (country / state / city):**

National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN)

The Deconcentrated Technical Services (STD) of the Ministries in charge of the rural sector are involved in the training of relay farmers. These are the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Animal Resources and the Ministry in charge of the environment.

**Recipient countries / states / cities:**

Rural producers in the provinces of Yatenga and Loroum

**Submitted by:**

NEER-TAMBA Project

## Learn More

STAKEHOLDERS	WEBSITE ADDRESS	FACEBOOK PROFILE/PAGE	Additional Details
Neer-Tamba project	<a href="http://www.neertamba.org">www.neertamba.org</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/projet.neertamba">https://www.facebook.com/projet.neertamba</a>	

<b>SE-CNSA</b>	<a href="http://www.se-cnsa.org">http://www.se-cnsa.org</a>		Executive Secretariat of the National Food Security Council / BF @secnsa Government agency
<b>SP / CPSA</b>	<a href="https://spcpsa.bf">https://spcpsa.bf</a>	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/spcpsa.bf/">https://www.facebook.com/spcpsa.bf/</a>	
<b>ONDD</b>	<a href="http://www.onedd-burkina.info">www.onedd-burkina.info</a>	-	
<b>CNA</b>	<a href="https://cna-burkina.org">https://cna-burkina.org</a>	-	National Chamber of Agriculture CNA @ BFCNA3 Community
<b>CRA North</b>			North Regional Chamber of Agriculture
<b>RECA-NIGER</b>	<a href="https://reca-niger.org/">https://reca-niger.org/</a>	The National Network of Chambers of Agriculture in Niger: <a href="https://www.facebook.com/recaniger">https://www.facebook.com/recaniger</a>	Study Tour to Niger by Burkina Faso stakeholders of the NEER-TAMBA project to learn about RECA-NIGER's innovative call center system: <a href="https://cna-burkina.org/spip.php?article148">https://cna-burkina.org/spip.php?article148</a> <a href="https://cna-burkina.org/spip.php?article148">https://cna-burkina.org/spip.php?article148</a>

### About the National Federation of Naam Groups (FNGN): Structuring of the FNGN and Operation of its supervisory network

AT VILLAGE, DISTRICT OR SECTOR LEVEL: THE GROUP.

To be recognized, the group must have at least fifty members. It can be exclusively female or male or mixed. The group is headed by an office of five members, elected by a general assembly, preferably by consultation and consensus, according to their character, temperament, and technical skills. The group is representative of all the social components of the locality. The committee represents the union at the local level. It takes care to preserve the "naam spirit" and the cohesion of its members. It analyzes the projects conceived by its members, and it discusses and regulates the relationship of the group with the other structures of the village. The committee chair can take all urgent decisions related to the life of the group and reports to the general assembly. The office also has a technical advisor and an auditor. In principle, each group has its bank account in a microfinance institution. The existence or implementation of projects gives rise to the establishment of specialized units or management committees for different activities. Thus, there are as many management committees as there are activities or projects.

The existence of several Naam groups in a locality requires the establishment of a coordination committee which brings together all the representatives of the groups. It plays a role of information, exchanges, and organization of activities. The functions of all managers are voluntary.



An endogenous facilitator is chosen at the village level as an agent for facilitating awareness-raising and exchanges.

#### AT THE LEVEL OF THE DEPARTMENT / MUNICIPALITY: THE UNION

At this level, the delegates of the base groups elect the office of the union in a general assembly, at the rate of two delegates per group. The board has twelve members. It receives, analyzes, and discusses projects emanating from grassroots groups and informs the Federation about all questions relating to grassroots groups and the union. There are currently ninety unions. All the endogenous animators set up the technical animation committee (CTA). The CTA is the technical tool of the union. Specific activities such as water and soil conservation / agroforestry (CES / AGF), sheep fattening, the mill, women's crafts, the conservation and processing of market garden products and fruits, improved stoves, water filters, hygiene, family planning,

#### AT THE PROVINCIAL LEVEL OR GROUP OF DEPARTMENTS: THE INTER-UNION

For greater efficiency in the implementation of activities and to facilitate the circulation of information and training actions, it is set up by union delegates during general meetings. The inter-union office is headed by four members. Inter-unions are formed according to geographical, administrative, historical and cultural affinities. There are currently eleven inter-unions that are located: in Bobo-Dioulasso, Diébougou, Dédougou, Gourcy, Ouagadougou, Ouahigouya, Séguénéga, Somiaga, Titao, Tougan, and Yako.

In each inter-union, there is a CES/AGF branch manager and a management assistant.

#### ON A NATIONAL LEVEL: THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF NAAM GROUPS (FNGN).

FNGN brings together all the unions. The federation is managed by an executive board of seventeen members. It is supported by a technical advisor, in this case the founding president of the Naam Groupings. Honorary members assist the active president. They are representatives of central power, customary authorities, and leaders of religious denominations.